



CONGREGATIO
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Vatican City, July 30, 2016

Prot. n. Sp.R. 1574/16

My Dear Sisters in Christ,

I send cordial greetings to you as you gather together in Atlanta, Georgia for your Annual General Assembly. May your days together be fruitful.

First of all, I offer a sincere word of thanks to the Conference and to your individual Institutes for the initiatives undertaken to promote the *Year of Consecrated Life*. The Year was indeed one which evoked hope and enthusiasm for the future of Consecrated Life. It is our hope that the spirit and commitment, evident throughout the Year, will continue well into the future.

This year Pope Francis has challenged us to *be merciful as the heavenly Father is merciful*. As Christian, and even more so as consecrated persons, we are called to be attentive to those in need and to reach out to them with the spiritual and corporal works of mercy "*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?*" (James 2:14-16).

In addition to encouraging you, as leaders to promote the practice of mercy in a special way during this Year of Mercy. I take this opportunity to challenge you in two areas which are crucial for our consecrated life to be effective: formation and the exercise of authority. My years as Superior and now as Secretary of this Congregation, have affirmed that most problems experienced by consecrated persons can be traced back to a deficiency in one of these areas.

Formators are entrusted with the awesome task of helping candidates to decide if indeed they are capable of living the challenges demanded by authentically living the evangelical counsels. They must also discern with the candidate whether he/she meets the basic requirements for becoming a member of the particular community which he/she has entered. The first attraction to an Institute does not guarantee the candidates' suitability for that Institute.

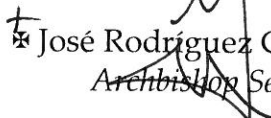
Participants
LCWR Annual Assembly 2016
Atlanta, Georgia

Accompaniment by mentors, well steeped in the charism and customs of the Institute, is essential to ensure that new members will, in turn, be able to transmit the charism to future generations. It is therefore of the utmost importance that your most authentic members be involved in formation. Following a sound initial formation program, programs of ongoing formation, corresponding to stages of development and aging must also be priorities for all Institutes and Societies. I encourage you to devote time to assessing your programs of initial and ongoing formation.

Another, equally important, factor which should be of concern to all is the exercise of authority within your communities. While one may possess excellent administrative skills, these alone do not suffice to effectively exercise the role required of a good religious leader. Those entrusted with positions of authority on all levels in a religious Institute must recognize their obligation to help other members of the community to live what they profess. Those unable to challenge others to meet the ideals of consecrated life and of the their Institute should not be in positions of authority. I ask you, with your councils, to take this into account when appointing members to positions of authority.

In closing I assure you of the prayerful support of this Congregation during your Assembly. I trust that your Assembly will afford each of you the opportunity to be inspired and challenged. May you also experience the mutual support which is one of the primary objectives of Conferences of Major Religious Superiors.

Sincerely in Christ,


† José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archbishop Secretary